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The Golden Sturgeon

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"If you want fine wine and poetry, go to the Kingfisher. If you want a broken nose, a cheap cot, and a lead on a ship sailing past the blockade, you go to the Sturgeon. Just keep one hand on your coin purse and the other on your dagger." — Rodolf Kazmer

Located right on the docks of Novigrad's Harbor District, The Golden Sturgeon is the beating heart of the city's maritime underworld. It is a loud, crowded, and unapologetically seedy tavern that caters to sailors, dockworkers, smugglers, and mercenaries.

The Sturgeon smells permanently of sea salt, spilled ale, and drying fish. It is not a place for the faint of heart, but it is undeniably the best place in the Free City to hire a crew, book passage on a smuggling vessel, or hear the latest rumors from the Skellige Isles and beyond.

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Atmosphere & Rules of the House

The atmosphere inside is a chaotic blur of shouting, singing, and the clatter of wooden tankards. The floorboards are perpetually sticky, and the air is thick with the smoke of cheap pipeweed. Fights are not just common; they are considered the primary form of evening entertainment.

The Sturgeon operates under a very simple, dockside code:

- **Fists Only:** Brawls are expected and encouraged. However, the moment steel is drawn, the entire tavern will turn on you. The guards won't be called—the patrons will just throw you into the harbor.
- **Coin on the Barrel:** There are no tabs. You pay for your ale and your room the moment you order it.
- **Mind the Cargo:** Many patrons are guarding illicit goods. Asking too many questions about what is in a captain's hold is a quick way to get a knife in the ribs.

Layout & Amenities

The Golden Sturgeon prioritizes maximum capacity over comfort. The main floor is a sprawling taproom packed with long wooden benches, a roaring hearth, and a small, battered stage where brave (or desperate) bards attempt to play over the din.

Upstairs, the accommodations are cramped, with thin walls that offer zero soundproofing. The beds are stuffed with straw, and the primary luxury is having a roof over your head that doesn't leak.

Prices & Services

While it sits in the expensive city of Novigrad, The Golden Sturgeon survives by relying on volume. Its prices are considered "Cheap" to "Average," making it accessible to standard laborers and traveling adventurers who have burned through their Crowns.

Lodging

Room Type	Capacity	Cost (per night)
Single Room	1 Person	15 Crowns
Double Room	2 Persons	25 Crowns
Dormitory Cot	1 Person (Shared Room)	8 Crowns
Common Room Floor	1 Person (Hearth-side)	3 Crowns

Services & Entertainment

Service	Cost	Description
Pint of Redanian Ale	3 Crowns	Cheap, strong, and watered down just enough to keep you drinking.
Fish Stew & Bread	6 Crowns	The house special. Hearty, filling, and heavily salted.
Cold Bath	5 Crowns	A wooden tub of cold harbor-water hauled up to your room.
Fistfighting Ring	10 Crown Buy-in	Organized brawls in the basement. Winner takes the pot.
Low-Stakes Gambling	10-50 Crown Buy-in	Dice Poker and standard Gwent played at the sticky corner tables.

GM Note

The Sturgeon as a Hub The Golden Sturgeon is the ultimate location for the **Mercenary**, **Criminal**, or **Day-Laborer** professions. If a player spends an evening buying drinks for the locals, they gain a **+2 to Streetwise and Sailing checks** when trying to hire a ship's crew, locate a smuggler, or find a black-market fence. It is the perfect place to interface with the *Naval Vessels & Ships* mechanics!

Key Personnel

- **Ludo (The Barkeep):** A massive, balding man with arms like tree trunks and

a permanently stained apron. He is gruff, speaks in single syllables, and keeps a heavy iron club under the bar to settle disputes.
- **"Cleaver's Boys" (Security):** The tavern operates under the "protection" of Carlo Varese (Cleaver), one of Novigrad's major crime bosses. A few heavily scarred dwarven enforcers are usually drinking in the corner, making sure no one damages the establishment too badly. Use the **Dwarven Mercenary** stat block.
- **Captain Yngvar (The Regular):** A Skelligan ship captain who is currently grounded due to Redanian taxes. He is loud, prone to arm-wrestling, and desperate for a wealthy patron to fund his next voyage.

Areas of Interest

- **The Taproom Floor:** The center of the action. This is where contracts are posted on the main pillar and where recruiters look for caravan guards and sailors.
- **The Cellar Ring:** Beneath the tavern is a cleared-out cellar used for illegal, bare-knuckle boxing. Bets flow freely here, and local gangs often use the space to hash out rivalries through proxy fighters.
- **The Smuggler's Dock:** The Sturgeon has a back door that opens directly onto a private pier. During the night, small rowboats silently pull up to unload untaxed cargo straight into the kitchen.

Rumors & Plot Hooks

- **The Pressed Crew:** Players wake up in the dormitories to find one of their party members missing. A desperate captain has been slipping sleeping powder into the ale and "pressing" patrons into service on a ship set to sail at high tide. The party has two hours to board the ship and get their friend back.
- **A Monster in the Nets:** A group of terrified fishermen are drinking away their sorrows in the corner. They hauled up something massive and heavily scaled in their nets, and it dragged two of their crew to the bottom of the harbor. They are offering their life savings to a Witcher who can clear the waters.
- **The Marked Deck:** A wealthy, out-of-town merchant is cleaning out the locals in Dice Poker, but the dwarven enforcers suspect he's using loaded

dice. They offer the party a cut of the money if they can join the game, catch the merchant in the act, and quietly relieve him of his winnings.

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